

COMPUTER WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTION

As a *Computer Shopper* reader, you probably know your way around a PC. The downside of knowing the ins and outs of Windows is that you'll often be asked to help fix friends' and family members' PCs, which can lead to many frustrating hours on the phone as you explain in intricate detail where to move the mouse and where to click.

There is an easier way, though. Using free tools, it's possible to take control of someone else's PC over the internet and use it as if you were sitting in front of it. In this month's *Computer Workshop* we'll explain how to control a PC remotely using either Windows Remote Assistance or LogMeln (provided on this month's cover disc), both of which are free to download and use. Windows Remote Assistance is easier to set up, but LogMeln is faster and more tolerant of firewalls. Whichever method you use, you're sure to save yourself time and frustration.

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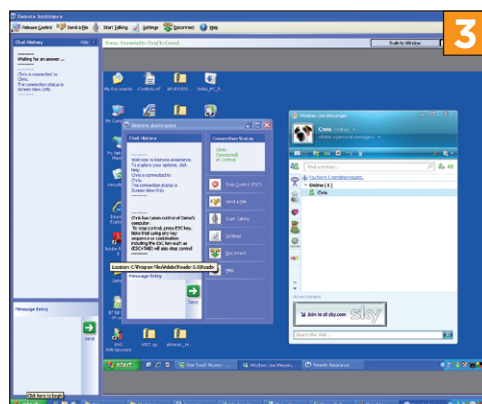
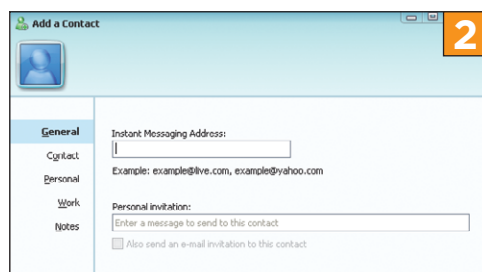
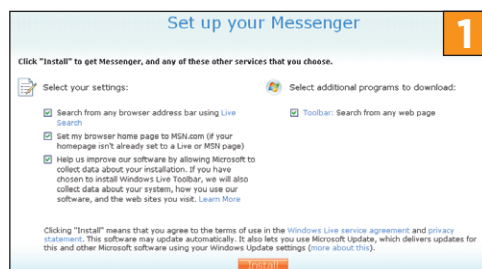
Take over a PC by remote control

Are you fed up with travelling to friends' houses to fix their PCs? Now you can do it over the internet from your own home

This month's workshop is in two parts. The first section explains how to use Windows' Remote Assistance feature, while the second takes you through using LogMeln to access a remote PC. Although Remote Assistance is built into Windows, the easiest way to get it working is to use it in conjunction with Windows Live Messenger, so that's the method we look at here. Whichever method you use, both PCs should have a broadband internet connection. It's possible to control a remote PC over a dial-up connection, but it will be so slow as to be almost unusable.

REMOTE ASSISTANCE WITH WINDOWS MESSENGER

1 Before you can use Remote Assistance with Windows Messenger, you need to download the latest version of Messenger on both PCs. Go to <http://get.live.com/messenger/overview> and click the Get it free button. By default, the installer will try to change your homepage to www.msn.com, change your web browser's search bar to Live Search and install the MSN toolbar, so if you don't want it to make any of these changes or installations, untick the relevant boxes



before you install. Then click Install, followed by Run. If a security warning appears, click Run again. Once you have accepted the licence agreement, you'll have the option to install various blogging and email tools. You don't need any of these for Remote Assistance, so leave the boxes unticked and click Close. Messenger is now installed, and you'll see the Messenger icon in your System Tray. Repeat the process for the PC to which you want to connect.

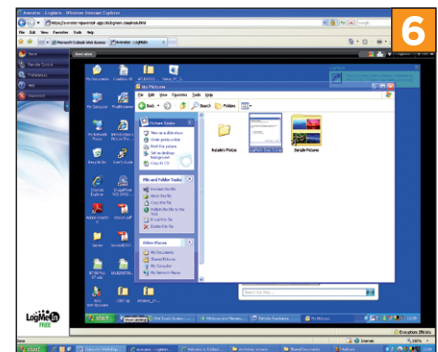
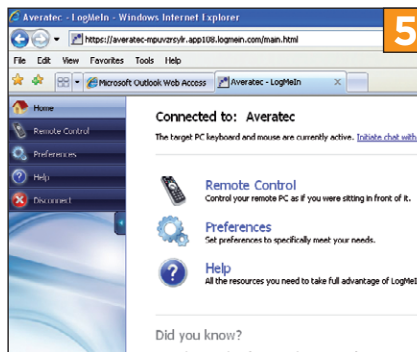
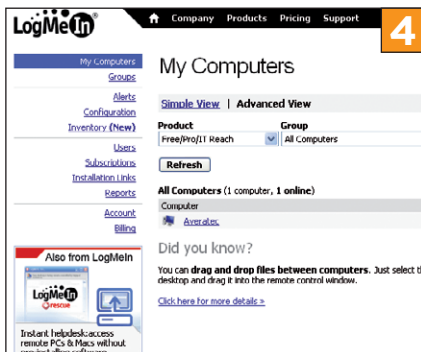
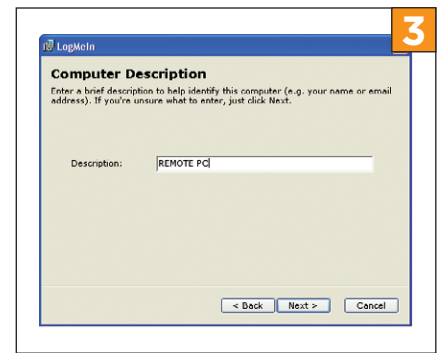
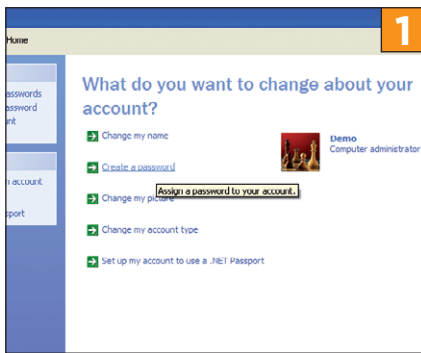
To sign in to Messenger, you'll need a Windows Live ID. If you already have an MSN or Hotmail account, you can use your current username and password to sign in. If you haven't, double-click on the Messenger icon in your taskbar. Click the Sign up for a Windows Live ID link at the bottom and follow the steps to sign up. You'll need a different ID for each PC, as you can't sign in to more than one PC with one Live ID.

2 When you have a Windows Live ID for each PC, sign in to Messenger on both PCs. You'll see your contacts list, but before the PCs can recognise each other you'll need to add them as contacts. On one of the PCs, click the Add a contact button, which looks like a small green man with a plus sign next to it. In the Instant Messaging Address box that appears, enter the Windows Live ID you used to sign in to the other PC, then click Add Contact. A contact request box will appear on the other PC, so click Allow this person to see when you are online and click OK. The two PCs will now appear as Online in each other's contacts lists.

To use Remote Assistance, one PC sends a request for Assistance, and the other agrees to assist. We'll refer to the PC that needs assistance as the remote PC, and the assisting PC as the local PC. On the remote PC, start a conversation with the local PC by double-clicking on its icon in the Contacts window. Now click the Show menu icon in the upper right-hand corner, go down to the Actions menu and click Request remote assistance. A remote assistance request will pop up on the local PC in a conversation window, so click the Accept link. The local PC will now connect to the remote PC, and the Remote Assistance window will load. A box will appear on the remote PC asking you to confirm that you want to start a Remote Assistance session. Click Yes.

3 You'll now have a window open on the local PC that shows exactly what's on the remote PC's screen. At standard settings, the display won't look particularly good, as it's running in a reduced number of colours for the sake of speed. If both PCs are on fast broadband connections, you can make the remote PC's desktop look better by clicking on the Settings button in either PC's Remote Assistance window and clicking the High quality button, then OK. Your software firewall may pop up a warning, so click the Unblock or Allow button to let the Remote Assistance traffic through.

At first, you can only view the remote PC's screen. You can provide assistance by typing instructions in the Message Entry box and watching the result onscreen, but it's easier to take control of the remote PC. To do this, click the Take Control button in the top left of the



Remote Assistance window in the local PC. You'll need to confirm this action on the remote PC by clicking Yes. If you now click anywhere on the remote PC's screen, you'll take control of it and can use it as if it were in front of you. You'll find that it runs fairly slowly, but it's adequate for solving PC problems. If the remote PC's screen resolution is higher than the local PC's, you may find that you have to scroll around the local PC's Remote Assistance window to see the entire screen. If so, click the Scale to Window button to resize the remote PC's screen to fit.

USING LOGMEIN

If you're behind a restrictive firewall, you may not be able to use remote assistance through Windows Messenger. You may be better off with the free LogMeIn service, which is on the cover disc. LogMeIn is more complicated to set up, but is better at adapting its connection to firewalls than Windows Messenger and is generally faster. It also doesn't require an invitation to work, so you can simply connect to the remote PC. You can also use it to control your work PC remotely from home, or your home PC from any internet browser anywhere in the world.

1 To use LogMeIn, the PC you want to access will need a Windows password. If you usually type in a username and password to access the PC, you can use those with LogMeIn. To set up a password under Windows XP, click Start, then click on the user account picture at the top of the Start menu. Now click the Back button at the top left of the window to go to the main account settings. In Vista, simply click Start followed by the user account picture. Now click Create a Password and enter your new password. You can also add a password hint if you wish. Click Create Password when you're done. In XP, you'll be asked if you want to make your files and folders private to hide them from other users of the PC, so click Yes or No as appropriate.

2 On the remote PC, go to www.logmein.com and click the Download LogMeIn Free button. Enter your email address in the boxes

and choose a password. Be aware that this isn't your email password. Select 'To support other people's PCs' from the drop-down box, and click Create Account. In the next screen, enter the required information and select the appropriate use for LogMeIn from the drop-down box, then click Create Account. You'll be sent an email with a confirmation link for the LogMeIn account. Open the LogMeIn email and click the activation link. A web browser window will open telling you that the account is active, so click the Save Settings button. Now log in to the service by entering your LogMeIn username and password in the boxes on the right. You may be asked if you want a free trial of one of LogMeIn's advanced paid-for services. Most people will find LogMeIn Free perfectly adequate, so we'd recommend sticking with the free version.

3 You'll now be shown the My Computers screen. If you accidentally close this window, you can get back to this screen by going to www.logmein.com, logging in and clicking the My Computers link at the top right of the screen. Next you need to add a local PC that can access the remote PC. Click the Add Computer link in the top right of the screen, and click Run to install the software. The software will download. Follow the steps, selecting the Typical installation option when prompted. You'll also be asked to provide a description of the remote PC to make it easy to identify. You can leave the default Windows computer name, or type in your own. Follow the rest of the steps to complete the installation.

4 Once the LogMeIn software is installed on the remote PC, the LogMeIn icon should appear in grey in the taskbar to show that the service is enabled and the PC is ready for you to access remotely. A web browser window will be open showing that you're still logged in to the LogMeIn website. The next step is to log in to the site from the local PC, so click the Logout button on the remote PC to log out of the service. To connect to the remote PC from the local PC, open your web browser, go to www.logmein.com

and enter your LogMeIn username and password. The My Computers screen will appear with the remote computer in the list.

To connect, click on the remote computer's name. Most current web browsers will now display a warning about installing an ActiveX control. Internet Explorer will show a warning in a yellow bar at the top of the browser window. Click on the bar and select Install ActiveX Control, then click Install in the box that appears.

Firefox will offer to install the LogMeIn plug-in for Firefox, so click Install Firefox plug-in, then click Install Firefox plug-in now. Firefox will display a yellow warning bar at the top of the screen, so click Edit options, then click the Allow button to add LogMeIn to the list of sites that are allowed to install software on your PC. Click Close, then click the Install Firefox plug-in now button again, and click Install in the window that pops up. Now click the Continue button.

5 Once your browser is set up to use LogMeIn, you'll be shown a login screen. Enter the Windows username and password for the remote PC. The main LogMeIn screen will appear in your browser. To take control of the remote PC, click the Remote Control button, then click OK. Your firewall may pop up a warning, so click Unblock or Allow. Now click the Continue button, and you'll have control of the remote PC. Your keyboard and mouse will control the remote PC until you click outside the window showing the remote PC's screen.

6 To view the remote PC in full-screen mode, click Options in the top right of the LogMeIn window, and click Full Screen. The LogMeIn task bar will hide itself automatically, so to bring it back, click at the very top of your screen. You'll notice that the remote PC's desktop has a reduced number of colours. LogMeIn automatically adjusts the display quality to suit your connection speed, but you can override this by clicking the Colour Quality icon at the top of the screen and selecting one of the options. Running LogMeIn at maximum image quality may make it run very slowly. **CS**